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September 15, 1988

88-148

CLC directors elect  
Land on 23-2 ballot

By Dan Martin

N-CO

NASHVILLE (BP)--On a 23-2 secret-ballot vote, directors of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission Sept. 12 elected Richard Land of Dallas as the new executive director-treasurer of the Southern Baptist moral and social concerns agency.

Land, 41, who has been vice president of academic affairs at Criswell College, an arm of First Baptist Church of Dallas, will assume day-to-day direction of the agency about Oct. 24, succeeding N. Larry Baker, who resigned June 3 following 16 months as executive.

In presenting Land as the choice of the eight-member search committee, Joe Atchison, a director of Baptist associational missions in Rogers, Ark., told commission members: "We (the search committee) decided from the beginning that we were not going to let any political fallout or any other thing keep us from going for the most qualified man ... God's man.

"Richard Land is the unanimous choice of the search committee."

Atchison had pledged to have an "open" process of selecting a replacement for Baker, whose selection and tenure of office was one of the most controversial in the history of the agency. Conservatives had complained they were "run over" by the then-moderate majority in the selection process, presentation and election of Baker, who was called on a 16-13 vote and, in September 1988, survived an effort to fire him when commission members tied 15-15.

Following the vote, Atchison told Baptist Press the "atmosphere of the meeting was markedly different in a very positive, upbeat way," from the tense meetings of January and September 1987. "Commission members said over and over how much they appreciated both the time we gave and the opportunity to ask questions," he said.

Also, after the vote, Land said: "I had the impression in all of my contacts with the search committee that they were very anxious that things were done in proper order and were seen to be done in proper order. They wanted to give commissioners all of the time they wanted for the discussion, and I felt there was a feeling of being able to ask whatever they wanted."

Fred Lackey, commission chairman and pastor of First Baptist Church of Athens, Ala., noted the "contrast in the atmosphere of this meeting," from that of the immediate past meetings. "This meeting was much, much more positive," he said.

In his presentation of Land to the board, Atchison acknowledged that charges of "politics probably will be made regardless of what we say until they get a chance to sit down and talk with Richard Land." He added some of the search committee had "negative feelings" about Land, "but when we sat down, those negative factors just fell away."

"We believe the Lord led us to Richard Land; we believe he is the best man," Atchison said, adding he received "absolutely no outside pressure regarding our recommendation. Nobody got on the telephone to try to sway us."

Trustee Coy Privette, executive director of the Christian Action League of North Carolina in Kannapolis, told Atchison he was "glad to hear" there was no political pressure, and commented that 18 months ago he had been told by a prominent conservative leader that it was only "a matter of time until Richard Land was elected executive director of the Christian Life Commission."

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A search committee member, Rudolph C. Yakym Jr., a stockbroker from South Bend, Ind., recounted that "five or six weeks ago" he had occasion to spend several hours with Paige Patterson, a leader in the conservative movement, and Land's boss at Criswell College.

"Never once did he (Patterson) bring up the matter of the Christian Life Commission, Richard Land, the nomination or any subject relative to that. I thanked him that he exhibited that kind of integrity," said Yakym, also secretary of the trustees.

Another search committee member, Alma Ruth Morgan, a homemaker from Bartlesville, Okla., said the committee chose Land "because of his principles ... Bible principles, and not because of who he knows."

Hal Lane, pastor of Eutawville (S.C.) Baptist Church, also a search committee member, said he "was probably the most outspoken critic of the process before. It has been a concern of this committee to make this process as open and fair as possible."

Larrey Noia, a church school administrator from Fountain Valley, Calif., said Land was not "among my top three choices" until the interviews. "Then, he immediately became my top choice. I favor him because of what I found in him."

In addition to Atchison, Yakym, Noia, Lane and Morgan, other members of the search committee were Lackey; Richard Elkins, a businessman from Albuquerque, N.M.; and Nolan Phillips, pastor of University Baptist Church, Middletown, Ohio.

When the vote was taken -- on a secret ballot recommended by Atchison -- 25 of the 31 members were present. Two members were absent and did not give a reason; three reported either personal or family illness, and one, Elkins, cited a business conflict.

Following his election, Land told commission members he is aware "perceptions of me are not neutral," and added: "There are many who will see this (the election) in a way that will be profoundly disturbing. I have a need and an obligation to try to dispel as many of those concerns as possible, and, if given the opportunity, I can dispel them."

Land said: "I am aware of the fact that there are some who feel that this was a quote done deal unquote from the beginning. I can say to you unequivocally that having gone through the process that it didn't feel like a 'done deal' to me.

"Anyone who thinks that didn't sit where I sat and didn't interact with the search committee as I interacted with them. I found them to be extremely probing. They were very thorough. I certainly did not feel that this was anything other than a valid and thorough process."

Prior to the vote, Land spent nearly three hours with commission members, giving his personal Christian testimony, spelling out his positions on moral issues -- including abortion, women in ministry and capital punishment -- describing his vision for the future course of the CLC and answering questions from the 25 board members present at the annual meeting.

The Houston native told how he had made a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ as a boy of 6 and was called to preach at 14, but did not acknowledge the call until two years later. He recounted his experiences attending Princeton University, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Oxford University, serving as pastor or interim pastor of churches in New Orleans, England and Texas and working as special assistant to the governor of Texas.

He also detailed his views on three issues which caused controversy between commission members and Baker: abortion, capital punishment and women in ministry.

"I have a strong pro-life position," he said, specifying he believes "it is only morally defensible to take life to protect life. The only reason for abortion is when the life of the mother is in extreme danger. I have held this position a long time."

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Later, under questioning Privette about what he would do if his own 14-year-old daughter were raped and impregnated by "a demented individual," Land responded he would be "personally devastated," but that a decision for abortion "would be a choice between my daughter and my granddaughter -- or grandson -- that I am not prepared to make." He added that "two wrongs don't make a right."

He said he believes capital punishment is "society's way of upholding the sanctity of human life. If human life is sacred and God has given it, then we must uphold its sanctity. When another person callously ... wantonly takes life, then capital punishment is one of the options of the magistrate."

On women, Land said men and women "are equal in God's sight," but does not believe the "New Testament allows women to be over men in the church ... or the home." He warned listeners not to "extrapolate from the home and the church," and specified he believes women should receive equal pay for equal work and are not prohibited from top positions in education, government, business, corporations, finance, politics or other work.

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Land tells trustees  
his 'vision for CLC'

By Dan Martin

N-60  
Baptist Press  
9/15/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--"The Christian Life Commission is never going to be the most popular agency in the Southern Baptist Convention," Richard Land told commissioners Sept. 12 before he was elected executive director-treasurer of the agency.

"People aren't always going to want to hear from us. You know, we are going to be bringing some bad news," said Land, 41, as he presented his "Vision for the CLC." He was elected on a 23-2 secret-ballot vote to succeed N. Larry Baker, who resigned June 3 after 16 months as executive director-treasurer.

Land made general comments before he dealt with specific areas he believes need to be addressed by the 14.7-million-member denomination's moral and social concerns agency.

"I personally think that the Christian Life Commission has a greater need for visibility and impact upon Baptists than ever before. There's always been a need for it, but the areas where Christian values come into contact with conflicting views on public policy and in our society are expanding rapidly.

"I think every Southern Baptist, at least every Southern Baptist who goes to church, ought to know about the Christian Life Commission ... its program statements ... what its purpose is ... its pamphlets ... its other materials," Land said.

"I believe that Southern Baptists working through the Christian Life Commission can have an enormously significant impact in the kind of nation that we live in in the year 2000. If we don't, then we ought to be ashamed."

In his "vision," Land touched on racial justice and racial equality, abortion, pornography, drug abuse and drug education, family issues, child abuse and homosexuality and AIDS. (The responses are Land's direct quotes unless otherwise noted.)

-- Race. "I've been very deeply committed to racial equality and racial justice as part of my Christian commitment since I was a teenager. To too great a degree in the past, our witness has been compromised by our willingness to live with the blasphemy of racial prejudice being propagated in the name of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"If the CLC doesn't bear witness to that, it doesn't deserve existence."

-- Abortion. "The CLC needs, in my opinion, to be on the cutting edge of the pro-life movement of Southern Baptists and in our society. If we are judged as a nation by how we treat the most helpless and defenseless within our midst, then we as a nation are failing.

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"Abortion is epidemic. At least one-third of all pregnancies in this nation are ended. And it's probably higher than a third. That means 33 percent of my children's playmates were never allowed to live because they were considered inconvenient, too expensive, too embarrassing or too abnormal.

"It seems to me that if we are not willing as Christians to take a stand on this issue, we fatally compromise our calling."

-- Pornography. "Pornography is a plague on our nation. In my observation, not only is pornography a direct contributor to sexual crimes, but is also one of the great hidden factors of divorce. The husband becomes addicted to a habit of watching or reading pornography which leads to an increasingly dehumanized, selfish relationship with the marriage partner."

-- Drug abuse/drug education. "One of the areas I worked on for the governor (of Texas) was drug abuse and its plague on our society, destroying our children. We've got to understand that my generation was the generation that first brought drugs into the mainstream of American life."

Land noted marijuana had been smoked in his dorm at Princeton, "although I didn't smoke it," and alcohol use by students under 21 years old was prevalent.

"The CLC should have absolutely no reticence about bearing a prophetic witness against the use of alcohol by Christians, period."

-- Family issues. "The family is under assault. I think we need to bear witness to the Christian concept in teaching sexuality. Sex is a positive good, one of God's greatest gifts. It is not to be bandied about lightly, not because it is dirty, but because it is holy.

"We need to bear prophetic witness to our young people about Christian dating. When is the last time you heard from an official source that it is contrary to God's will to date non-Christians? As I understand the New Testament, it is.

"When I make that statement, people nod knowingly and say, 'Wait till your daughter reaches that age.' Well, I'm not waiting until she reaches that age. I've been working on that since she was about 6 weeks old. Maybe I have done a little too well because she's not only horrified about a friend of hers dating a non-Christian, but if they date a non-Baptist.

"We need to be bearing prophetic witness not just with the don't's but with the do's.

"We need to be aggressively involved in parenting. People of my generation are going to be faced with a lengthy dialogue on the question of what it means to honor thy father and thy mothers. Our mothers and fathers are going to be around for a long time."

-- Child abuse. "I believe that we've got an epidemic of child abuse in our society. I believe we live in an anti-child society. There is a very different attitude toward children now than what I experienced. We need to seek out the very best research on why that is so.

-- Homosexuality and AIDS. AIDS is not going to go away, unless there is a miracle. I know at least one member of my church, First Baptist Church of Dallas, who died. He didn't get it intravenously or through a blood transfusion. Married. His wife may be exposed; she doesn't know yet.

"God hates homosexuality. God loves the homosexual. We have got to bear witness against the sin and witness to the sinner. That is going to be increasingly difficult.

"Just as the woman's ordination issue has been used by many -- too many, I'm afraid -- to disguise sexism, the AIDS issue has been used by some, I'm afraid, to mask hatred of homosexuals. We have got to bear witness against that.

"Within the next 10 to 15 years, we will be facing a situation that none of us are old enough to have ever faced. That is a pandemic. This incurable disease will strain our commitment to the Christian gospel and our commitment to civil rights in a way they have never been strained before.

"In my opinion, the great threat to our freedom in America precisely at the point of AIDS. How are we going to protect our society against the spread of this disease without fatally compromising our constitutional rights as American citizens, both infected and not infected.

"That is an issue belonging to the Baptist Joint Committee and the Public Affairs Committee, in terms of First Amendment rights, but it is also an issue we're going to have to face as Southern Baptists and individual Christians. What does God want me to do?"

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SBC Cooperative Program  
stays ahead of 1986-87

N-CO

Baptist Press  
9/15/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--With just one month remaining in its fiscal year, Southern Baptists' national ministry budget remains ahead of its previous pace but behind the rate of inflation.

The Cooperative Program received \$11,462,233 in August, a gain of 1.82 percent over August of 1987, reported Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee.

The August receipts brought the program's year-to-date total to \$123,377,789 at the end of 11 months of the fiscal year, Bennett said. That amount is 2.69 percent ahead of the total for the same period last year.

The current U.S. inflation rate is about 4.1 percent.

The current budget marks the first time in seven years that national receipts for the Cooperative Program -- as measured in constant dollars, which includes the inflation rate -- have fallen below the previous year's Cooperative Program gifts, or a loss of about 0.94 percent, Bennett said.

The Cooperative Program must receive a record \$16.6 million in September if it is to reach its \$140 million goal for the year ending Sept. 30. The previous monthly record was \$15.5 million, contributed last January.

Divided into 12 monthly installments, the current Cooperative Program allocation budget requires \$11.7 million per month to reach its goal. The program has averaged slightly more than \$11.2 million per month for 11 months.

If September receipts hold to the average, the program will fall about \$5.4 million below the overall goal but will surpass the first phase of its basic operating budget by \$2.6 million.

The Cooperative Program's 2.69 percent year-to-date increase is about what convention officials predicted, said Tim A. Hedquist, Executive Committee vice president for finance and business affairs. "We've been projecting 2.5 percent," he said.

However, an estimate for the final total is difficult, he added: "Projections are meaningless. It all depends on when the final checks from the state Baptist conventions arrive. If a check is received before Sept. 30, it is counted in this year's budget; but if it comes later, it goes toward the next budget."

"It is my sincere hope that the state conventions will have a strong Cooperative Program response from the churches during the last month of the fiscal year," Bennett said.

Hedquist projected the final total will be about \$133.6 million, enough to cover the first phase of the basic operating budget and to provide a little more than \$1.5 million for capital needs.

National Cooperative Program receipts, such as the \$11.5 million received in August, represent about 39 percent of total Cooperative Program receipts. The balance of Cooperative Program funds is used for mission programs within state Baptist conventions.

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The Executive Committee disburse the national Cooperative Program funds to 19 Southern Baptist organizations, which conduct evangelistic, missionary and educational endeavors worldwide.

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RTVC board OK delay  
of ACTS sale closing

N-10  
(RTVC)

Baptist Press  
9/15/88

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Trustees of the Radio and Television Commission approved a 45-day extension for closing the sale of the ACTS television network, adopted two operating budgets for the 1988-89 fiscal year and heard reports of a major telemissions effort in the Peoples Republic of China scheduled for this fall.

Meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, Sept. 13, the commission accepted a \$100,000 payment from Friends of Acts, a San Antonio, Texas, based investment group, in exchange for amending the ACTS sale contract to extend the date of closing from Sept. 15 to Oct. 30, 1988.

If the sale is concluded by Oct. 30, the payment would apply toward the \$10 million payment scheduled at closing. If Friends of ACTS should fail to complete the sale by the revised termination date, the \$100,000 would be nonrefundable, commission spokesmen said.

An additional \$1 million for purchase of programming is scheduled to be paid at closing, and Friends of ACTS has agreed to purchase at least \$2 million in programming from the commission each year for ten years. The RTVC is to receive up to 35 hours of programming time each week for 30 years. Also, the RTVC will be paid a three percent override on network income from advertising and affiliate fees.

Members of the commission also adopted two operating budgets for the 1988-89 fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 1988. The first, which totals \$7.4 million, anticipates transfer of the network operation to Friends of ACTS. It features marked increases for television and radio production and the assigned programs of counseling and technical assistance to churches and other Baptist entities.

A second plan, described as an austerity budget, calls for continued operation of ACTS by the RTVC. It anticipates a total income of \$8.087 million from all sources, and operating and debt service expenses of \$8.075 million.

Commission officials said the first budget was smaller than the "austerity" version because it did not include income from affiliate service fees nor expenses for satellite transponder and uplinking which are related to the network operation.

Commission President Jimmy R. Allen reported that Friends of ACTS asked for the delay because of the time needed to form a management team for the network and to complete legal documents to meet requirements of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. SEC rules require that a prospective investor have opportunity to study an offering document before being asked to invest.

"In order for a stock offering to work," Allen said, "Friends of ACTS had to have a management team in place. It has taken a while to put that management team together," he added.

Allen said that Friends of ACTS has employed Gene Linder, former executive of the second largest cable system organization in the nation, ATC, to be chief operating officer of the new corporation. Stephen Baum, former director of financial planning for Datapoint Corp. is chief financial officer, he said.

Thomas E. Rogeberg, former chief operating officer for CBN Cable, has been employed as consultant to senior management to assist in setting in place a sales and marketing team for the network. Allen announced in April that he would accept the position of president and chief executive officer of the network if offered the position by the new owners. He said he does not expect that offer to be made until the network transfer is completed.

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The China telemissions effort resulted from an invitation by Central China Television in Beijing. The mainland China television network invited the RTVC to produce a 90-minute program featuring the Centurymen and the traditional Chinese broadcast orchestra in Beijing. The Centurymen is a 100-voice male concert choir made up of ministers of music from all over the United States.

Allen said the concert would make possible, for the first time, a prime time presentation of the gospel to the whole nation of China. The Centurymen, directed by Buryl Red, will sing a number of hymns and gospel songs in English and Mandarin Chinese during the program. The program is to be taped live and broadcast throughout China within ten days of taping.

Following the nationwide concert, groups of the Centurymen will perform in Chinese churches. A one hour network documentary program will be produced for ABC television to be carried on the network in 1989. Both programs also will be shown on ACTS later, Allen said.

In other actions, the trustees approved amendments to the ACTS sale contracts. The two parties agreed that the purchasers would look only to the Radio and Television Commission for performance under the contracts and would not hold the Southern Baptist Convention, or any other Baptist entity, responsible for it. A second amendment stipulated the "RTVC has the right, but not the obligation" to use the full 35 hours per week of program time provided for in the programming contract. A security agreement also was approved which would give the commission a mortgage on all of the purchased assets or require a letter of credit in a form acceptable to RTVC in an amount equal to at least double the cost of the physical assets being transferred.

The next scheduled meeting of the commission is Jan. 9-10, 1989. A special meeting of the board will be called in October 1988 when the network transfer is closed.

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23 visa renewals denied  
for Indonesia missionaries

N-FMB

Baptist Press  
9/15/88

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--In a continuing forced reduction of personnel, 23 Southern Baptist missionaries to Indonesia have been told their resident visas will not be renewed.

One missionary couple, Ken and Mary Ellison, received extensions on their visas. The Ellisons, who have been missionaries in Southeast Asia since 1967, teach at Indonesian Baptist Theological Seminary in Semarang, and he is director of the Indonesia branch of Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary. He is from Roanoke County, Va., and she considers Marietta, Ga., her hometown.

The latest visa rejections bring the total number of Southern Baptist missionaries forced to leave Indonesia this year to 32. Seventeen others have been notified their visas will not be extended and expect to leave the country in the next few months. The remaining 45 missionaries do not foresee visa complications in the near future.

Last year Indonesia began informing missionaries who had lived there 10 years or more that their visas would no longer be renewed. Similar warnings in the past had not brought major changes in visa renewals, but in early April the first Southern Baptist missionary affected by the enforced policy was required to leave the country.

Although the policy is eliminating most of the veteran missionaries, visas recently were granted for 10 newly assigned Southern Baptist missionaries.

Most missionaries who have received final rejections are involved in starting new churches. Others have worked in mission administration, seminary extension and publications. All have been in Indonesia at least 14 years. Most have been there 20 years or longer, and one missionary has been there for 32 years. Most of them will be assigned to other locations in South Asia.

The latest group of missionaries whose visa renewals were denied are:

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-- Charles and Mary Ann Blumer of Marshall, N.C., and Kingsport, Tenn., respectively. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1967 and have been involved in starting churches and seminary extension work.

-- Charles and Barbara Cole of Gardena, Calif., and Ardmore, Okla. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1968 and have been involved in seminary work.

-- Bill and Liz Corwin of Sallisaw, Okla., and Oklahoma City. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1967 and have been involved in starting churches.

-- Mary Alice Ditsworth of Pascagoula, Miss. She was appointed in 1956 and has been involved in publications work.

-- Hal and Carol Jacks of Greenville, S.C., and Lanett, Ala. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1965 and have been involved in seminary work and starting churches.

-- Marvin and Linda Leech of Abilene, Texas, and Warrington, Fla. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1969 and have been involved in seminary work.

-- Jim and Carolyn McAtee of Jackson, Miss. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1971 and have been involved in starting churches.

-- Clyde and Elaine Meador of Albuquerque, N.M. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1974 and have been involved in seminary work and mission administration.

-- Leon and Anne Mitchell of Clovis, N.M., and Dallas. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1957 and have been involved in mission administration.

-- Ray and Joyce Rogers of Wilmington, N.C., and Florence, S.C. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1963 and have been involved in starting churches.

-- Von and Marge Worten of Pawhuska, Okla., and Phoenix, Ariz. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1964 and have been involved in starting churches.

-- John and Diane Norwood of Livingston, Texas, and Dallas. They were appointed to Indonesia in 1972 and have been involved in starting churches.

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Annie gifts may record  
lowest increase, Lewis says

By Joe Westbury

N- HMB  
Baptist Press  
9/15/88

ATLANTA (BP)--Gifts to the Southern Baptist Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions may record their lowest increase in nearly two decades if the current giving trend is not reversed, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis told the agency's executive committee.

In addition to the report on missions giving, board members elected a Californian as associate director in the metropolitan missions department and appointed 31 missionaries during their Sept. 13 meeting.

Lewis told the directors if contributions continue at the present rate for the remainder of the year, the board will receive an estimated \$30.4 million, or 81 percent of the 1988 goal of \$37.5 million.

The projection would be an increase of only \$151,000, or one-half of 1 percent, compared to the previous year's increase of 8.8 percent. The marginal gain would be the lowest increase in Annie Armstrong offering giving since 1970, when the offering dropped 1.6 percent, Lewis noted.

"I'm grateful to God and to Southern Baptists for the projected increase. But I'm deeply concerned that the increase would not even keep up with our 4.5 percent inflation rate, and that the projection is \$7.1 million below the goal," he told committee members.

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Lewis noted that during the past 15 years, gifts through the special offering have increased an average of 11.3 percent, or 5.15 percent when adjusted for inflation. The annual offering for home missions has not reached the goal since 1981.

Reasons for the trend cannot yet be determined, Lewis said, but he added early returns from the denomination's 10 largest-giving states have not kept up with inflation or last year's percentage increase. "What happens in these 10 key states determines giving trends for the entire denomination," he said.

At this time last year, the top 10 states in giving reported an increase of 10 percent, but current figures for the same time period show this year's receipts running at only 0.36 percent.

Of the top 10 states, six reported increases and four reported decreases, Lewis said. Kentucky posted the largest percentage gain with 5.71 percent, while slight increases were registered by Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, Texas and Virginia.

The four leading states reporting decreases were Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina and Alabama.

Lewis pointed out an average nationwide increase of 28 percent will be required to reach the \$39 million offering goal in 1989. He then urged the board members to do better than the average and set a good example by challenging their churches to increase giving by 50 percent.

In his report to the board, Lewis also briefed executive committee members on the Home Mission Board's efforts to distribute copies of the Gospel of John to people who attend the movie "The Last Temptation of Christ."

Lewis reported the board is making available free copies of the Gospel of John to Baptist associations where the movie is playing. He urged board members involved in a positive witness to people who see the controversial film.

"I believe Christians ought to be at every theater where this movie is showing -- not to see the movie, but to witness personally to the people who do," Lewis said.

In other business, Ellis Caswell Pitman, director of missions for Gold Coast Baptist Association in Oxnard, Calif., was elected assistant director in the metropolitan missions department.

The new position was created to enable the board to better coordinate its strategies in evangelizing major metropolitan cities in the western United States.

Pitman, who will maintain his residence in suburban Los Angeles, will be the department representative for 13 western states, including Alaska, Hawaii and Western Canada. Nine of the 11 cities with more than 1 million population targeted for evangelism in the region are located in California.

A native of Lancaster County, S.C., Pitman was pastor or assistant pastor of California churches from 1966 to 1983. He has been director of missions for the Gold Coast Association for five years.

Directors also appointed 13 missionaries, two missionary associates and 16 church planter apprentices.

Conference center attendance  
down slightly from last year

N-SB

NASHVILLE (BP)--Combined summer attendance at Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Centers dropped slightly this year due to a change in conference scheduling at Ridgecrest, according to Robert Turner, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church services division.

The combined 1988 summer attendance at Glorieta and Ridgecrest was 54,371, a drop of 1,270 from the 55,641 who attended summer conferences in 1987.

"One reason the attendance is down is because the Foreign Mission Board did not have a foreign mission week conference at Ridgecrest this year," Turner said. "A small Sunday school conference, which is shorter and has less registration, took its place."

At Glorieta, 1988 attendance was 26,634, down 167 from the previous year's total of 26,801. At Ridgecrest, this year's attendance was 27,737, down 1,103 from the 28,840 who attended last year.

Turner said Glorieta met its registration goal, while Ridgecrest did not because of the schedule change.

"But, we were pretty full at both places except for the first and last weeks of the summer when children are in school," he said.

Meanwhile, a combined Cooperative Program offering of \$55,835 was given at conference centers this summer, an increase from the 1987 total of \$51,394.

A total of 17,343 attended eight Sunday school leadership conferences at Ridgecrest and Glorieta, up 812 from the previous year's total of 16,531 when seven conferences were held.

Church Training Leadership Conference totals increased slightly, from 4,503 in 1987 to 4,654 this year.

Attendance at church music conferences decreased by only 133, from 6,346 last year to 6,213 this year, and student ministry conference attendance totals remained exactly the same. In 1987 and 1988, 4,725 students and leaders registered for the conferences.

Two Bible preaching conferences lost a total of three registrants from last year's figure of 3,681, and a church media library conference gained 57 for a conference registration total of 173.

The conference centers are operated by the Sunday School Board.